

Tisane



ti-sane ti-'zan, -'zän, n.

Etymology: Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin ptisana, from Greek ptisanē, literally, crushed barley, from ptissein to crush - Date: 14th century : an infusion (as of dried herbs) used as a beverage or for medicinal effects

HEADLINES

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Mission Statement:

The goal of the Eastern Kingdom Herbalists and Apothecaries' Guild is to encourage study, teaching and practice of medieval herb uses, as well as study of medieval apothecary and pharmacy practice, in the East Kingdom. The Guild should serve as a conduit for herbalists and apothecaries in the kingdom to communicate with and learn from each other, and to disseminate knowledge about medieval herbalism and pharmacy to others.

Report from the Chronicler:

The Good News appears to be that several important issues were officially decided at Pennsic (see page 8). We can now move another step; submit our badge and figure out a method for rank panelling.

The Bad News appears to be that no tithe was presented to the Queen at Pennsic. Furthermore, our charter-stipulated annual herb-related event hasn't happened either.

Can you find a site for an event? How about someone to coordinate Queen's Tithes?

Or maybe you're busy forming a local group or teaching at an EKU. Keep it up!

-- Johanna

To get on our mailing list, e-mail to joanne@jafath.com or drop an old-fashioned note to the return address on the mailer. If you are on line, join us on the sca-herbalist mailing list (go to www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist to sign up) or the East-specific EK-Herb (sign up from www.eastkingdom.org/herb).

While you're on line, take a look at our website at www.eastkingdom.org/herb

Do you have a favorite herb, gardening tip, historical tidbit, or recipe? Maybe a review of a book you think the world should share? That's perfect for this newsletter — send it to the Chronicler!

ROSE OIL AND/OR CREAMS

*from Gianotta Dallafiora
by way of the sca-cooks list and the ek-herbs list:*

Here is my period hand cream redaction. I learned it as a volunteer at Pennsbury Manor, a 17th century historic site, and in doing some research found Elizabethan versions. It's an oil and beeswax handcream, the oil is steeped in fresh roses, and rosewater is used to "whiten" and mix the oil and wax together.

My hand cream was made this way:

For the oil of roses, take 2 or so pounds of fresh, strong-smelling roses. I gather mine from my apothecary, my Tudor, and my damask rose bushes. Stuff the some of the roses into a covered crockery pot, pour in some olive oil, add some more roses, pour in some more oil, until the jar is stuffed absolutely full. Place in the sun, covered with a loose crockery lid, for a week, or place the jar in a pan of hot water. Strain the oil through muslin, discarding the pulped rose goop, and place the oil in a brown glass bottle. This can keep for quite awhile in the refrigerator.

For the cream take a couple of ounces of the oil, 2 or so of yellow beeswax, and melt the beeswax in the oil over a double boiler. When the wax is just melted, pour the oil-wax mixture into a ceramic bowl inset into another bowl partly filled with cold water. Add rosewater in a steady stream, beating the mixture with a small spatula until I judged the mixture thick/thin enough and cannot absorb any more rosewater (you can pour the excess off). I then add four drops of lavender essential oil, two drops of rosemary essential oil, and 12 or so drops of orange blossom essential oil, beating well between each mixture. Other good essential oil additions could be tuberose, rose (if you have the real deal), thyme, and bergamot.

Here are period recipes for the Oyntment of Roses:

From *the Widowes Treasure*, printed by Edward Alde for Edward White 1588 at London.

To make the Oyntment of Roses

Take oyle of roses foure ounces, white waxe one ounce, melte them together over seething water, then chafe them together with Rosewater and a little white vinegar.

John Partridge, *The Treasurie of Hidden Secrets and Commodious Conceits*, 1586

To Make Oyntment of Roses

Take oyle of Roses four ounces, white wax one ounce, melt them together over seething water, then chafe them together with Rose-water and a little white vinegar.

This recipe by Alethea Talbot, printed in *Natura Exenterata*, is out-of-period by 1655. but it was the only citation I could find for what Oyl of Roses was. I assume when she says "leaves," we would say "petals."

To make Oyl of roses.

Take a pound and half of red Rose leaves, cut away the whites, and stamp them small, and put them in a glasse or earthen pot; put thereto a quart of Oyl Olive; and let the glasse be full of Oyl and leaves within an inch of the top, then stop it close with paste, that no air come into it, and set the glasse in a pot full of Water, as high as the Oyl is, and no higher; and set the glasse fast that it fal not, with some Hay under it at that it break not, and let it seeth in the pot til the water be half wasted; then take the pot from the fire, and let the glasse stand in it without removing til it be cold, afterward take out the glas and pour out the Oyl, and put it in another glas, and put fresh rose leaves to it. This manner is to be observed in making Oyl of all other Herbs.



PURSLANE

One of the fascinations of historical herbalism is the way a plant can go from being recommended for everything from earaches to snake bite and broken bones, to not even being listed in the Herbal PDR. This is the case with purslane, *portulaca oleracea* (common purslane) or *portulaca sativa* (golden purslane).

Purslane is a New World plant in origin, although it was common in Europe by the end of SCA period and is included in Gerard, Turner, and Culpeper.

HISTORY

Culpeper assesses purslane as hot in the second degree and wet in the fourth, a mildly unusual combination, especially for something that was supposed to cool heat in the liver, and counteract hot agues and heat-caused headaches.

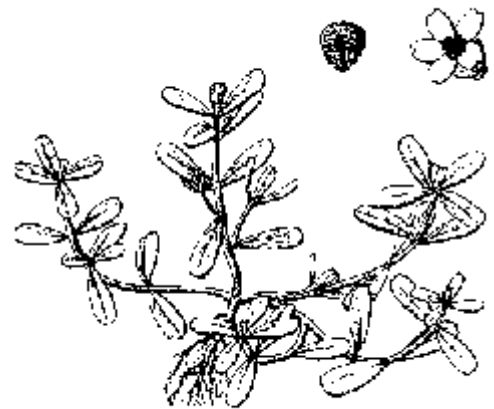
Gerard tends to treat purslane as a vegetable, recommending it both raw (in spring) and cooked (as a winter vegetable). It cools the blood, he says, and causes appetite.

The stems can be pickled, and it, with sorrel, is a main component of the French *soupe bonne femme*. The seeds, boiled in wine, were given to children as a vermifuge. Interestingly enough it, in combination with other herbs, is still a folk remedy for internal parasites in the Caribbean.

The website of Cornell University's Animal Science department lists 76 uses of purslane in various countries. (So why isn't it even mentioned in the Herbal PDR?)

CULTIVATION

Mrs. Grieve's *Modern Herbal* goes into some detail concerning propagation and maintenance of this herb. As any gardener knows, and as several "invasive weed" websites attest, getting the plant started is the easy part. What's hard is stopping it, because it forms seeds very early in its life cycle, and in great numbers. Cultivation just spreads the seeds around or brings older ones to light, air, and life.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7461.html, (U.C. Davis's Invasive Weed website)
www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/p/prugol77.html, (*A Modern Herbal* online)
www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/medicinal/portula.html, (Medicinal Plants at Cornell's Animal Science school)
<http://info.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm> (Culpeper on line, Yale University)
PDR for Herbal Medicine

Is It Amber?

Taken from the files of The Viking Answer Lady

FOR FLOATATION TESTING YOU WILL NEED:

- [A] one jar filled with a solution of 1T salt to each 10 oz H₂O.
- [B] one jar filled with a solution of 2T salt to each 10 oz H₂O.
- [C] one jar filled with a solution of 3T salt to each 10 oz H₂O.

In order to perform the test, take the piece being tested and drop it gently into Jar [A], and note whether it floats or sinks. Remove the piece, pat it dry with a clean paper towel or cloth, and repeat with Jar [B] and again with Jar [C].

AMBER will only float in [B] and/or [C], depending on the exact variety of amber. Real amber will take a static charge when rubbed with wool, does not burn readily, gives off a piney odor when hot pointed, and tends to be "warm" to the touch unlike the chill from hard gems or glass. Sp. Grav = 1.03 to 1.10. Hardness - Baltic = 2 to 2.5, Burmese or pressed amber = 3, Dominican = 1.5 to 2. Knife testing results in granules or powder.

COPAL While vigorous rubbing with wool or velvet will impart a static charge to true amber, and sometimes release a faint scent of pine due to heat generated by friction, vigorous rubbing to the point of heating will cause heat softening of the surface layers of copal, making them slightly sticky.. Like amber, copal may have embedded bugs or plant bits. Copal is a "recent resin" meaning it has not been fossilized, and is most commonly found in Africa, Brazil, East India, and a similar substance, Kauri Gum, is found in New Zealand. Sp. Grav = 1.06 to 1.08

IMITATION COPAL (African Amber, Afghanistan Amber, Egyptian Amber, Prayer Beads) floats in [A], [B] and [C], and may even float in plain H₂O. Usually pale yellow, turbid red, or "heat-reddened" (true copal cannot be heat-reddened -- it just melts). The "Egyptian" or "Afghanistan" variety usually are found in conjunction with old Middle Eastern silver beads. Imitation copal is made of synthetic resins. This imitation of an imitation of amber may be distinguished by noting flow lines where the material was formed into long rods than cut into beads, and is especially noticeable if one obtains several beads from the same rod at once. A uniform grain running parallel to the axis of many similar, large-sized, tubular or barrel-shaped beads indicates that they were originally one long piece of plastic. Hot pointing results in melting and a burnt plastic odor. Sp. Grav = 1.05.

POLYBERN may float in [C] or in a saturated solution of salt water. Polybern is made of real amber chips, amber dust, and some polystyrene resin. Usually made in a mold with a layer of resin, chips then resin. Look for mold marks, layering from the three-stage resin pour, and tiny air bubbles around the embedded chips. Hot pointing polybern can often smell just like amber due to high quantity of amber dust in the matrix. Be suspicious of any chunky, square-edged looking "amber" especially if it originated in Poland or sometimes Germany. It looks good, but should cost 1/3 or less of real amber. Sp. Grav = varies.

POLYSTYRENE (plastic, thermoplastic) floats in [A], [B] and [C], and may even float in plain H₂O. Generates static electricity when rubbed on wool or velvet. Hot pointing results in melting and a burnt plastic odor. Sp. Grav = 1.05. Knife testing results in curls or shavings.

CELLULOID (cellulose nitrate, cellulose acetate) sinks in [A], [B] and [C]. Adheres to hot point w/camphor odor (warning, may be extremely flammable!) Fluoresces yellowish-white in UV light. Sp. Grav = 1.29 to 1.42. Knife testing results in curls or shavings. May be valuable in and of itself as an antique imitation amber.

HORN sinks in [A], [B] and [C] and often sinks even in a saturated salt solution, though rare examples may float due to trapped air in internal layers. Most often originates in Ireland, frequently appear as rosaries or rosary beads, usually dyed to a yellowish color, made into small barrel-shaped beads. Hot point gives a definitive identification as horn due to the burnt hair odor. Sp. Grav >1.10

REPORT FROM PENNSIC

by Jadwiga, Carowyn, and others on the ek-herb listserv

We had a number of people from the Midrealm there, looking into starting their own guild. We pretty much decided on a four-rank guild structure, Novice, Apprentice, Journeyman, Master. The badge we are putting in for is a mortar and pestle (gold) with green rosemary leaf.

We did not make a tithe this reign, because we didn't get our acts together. I would like to ask if someone can volunteer to coordinate the tithes from now on.

We have a couple things that would be good to push in the kingdom:

- handwashing ceremony
- comfits and spiced wine/drinks at the end of feasts
- strewing herbs

We need volunteers to teach at the Metalsmith symposium and Wear Schola.

There is some talk of doing a small medieval style garden at Pennsic next year, up by the Dragon's Magic across from the Barn.



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